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RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4465  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000137

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SUBJECT: OUTBRIEF ON FOREIGN SECRETARY MENON'S VISIT TO  
NEPAL

Classified By: Ambassador Nancy J. Powell. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary. Ambassador and DCM met with Indian Ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood February 19 to exchange briefings on the visits of Assistant Secretary Boucher and Indian Foreign Secretary Menon to Nepal. Sood indicated that Menon's only significant meeting was with PM Dahal where Menon stressed increasing concern in Delhi about the lack of clear messages emanating from the Maoist leadership on a number of key issues, about the activities of the Young Communist League (YCL), and treatment of the Nepal Army. On the army, Dahal indicated a desire to move rapidly on the release of the 4000 who have been declared non-combatants, perhaps in as little as six weeks, and to complete the integration/rehabilitation of the remaining 19,000 PLA within six months. Although he continued to insist that he did not expect all 19,000 to join the army, Dahal raised the number to be integrated from an earlier 3-5,000 to 9,000. Sood intends to convene an international donor group to discuss a rapid response to the Nepali request for assistance with the 14000. Sood indicated that while Menon appreciated the mainly positive responses that he received, Delhi would be looking for action having learned the hard way that Dahal's assurances usually lack follow through. End summary.

12. (C) Ambassador and DCM met Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood February 19 to exchange briefings on the visits of Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher (February 11-12) and Indian Foreign Secretary Shankar Menon (February 17-18). In addition to PM Dahal, Menon met with former PM Koirala, COAS Katawal, Foreign Minister Yadav, and a host of business people. Sood indicated that with the exception of the meeting with Dahal, the meetings were pro forma and had little new content. Menon had come to deliver a message of concern to Dahal that concentrated on three areas: the lack of clear messages on key issues emanating from Maoist leadership, the threat from continued illegal YCL activities, and treatment of the Nepal Army.

13. (C) Using a detailed brief prepared by the embassy, Menon documented the contradictory and frequently alarming statements that have come from Maoist party leaders, ministers, and the Prime Minister on India-Nepal relations, PLA integration, and democracy, including the constitution drafting process. He told Dahal that his comments were too frequently those of a party leader and were not prime ministerial. He indicated that the confusion was undermining

support in New Delhi and creating questions about the party's commitment to democracy and the peace process, which had suffered as a result of the revolutionary rhetoric. Dahal's response centered on his efforts to improve his own position within the party and on the need to keep his cadres motivated.

¶4. (C) Menon also documented YCL abuses in detail and told Dahal that the lack of progress in first restraining and then eliminating the YCL was seen in Delhi as a major threat to the government and to peace in Nepal. Sood reported that Dahal made no comment in response.

¶5. (C) According to Sood, discussion of the Nepal Army included both the recent controversy involving recruitment as well as the integration/rehabilitation of the PLA and the non-combatants. Menon underscored the need to respect the army, to ensure that it maintained its professionalism. He urged Dahal to allow COAS Katawal to complete his term and agreed to counsel Katawal to respect the new government. Dahal told Menon that he was intent on resolving the issues involving the 4000 non-combatants now, preferably within the next six weeks, and requested Indian assistance in designing an array of options for those leaving the camps. On the issue of the 19,000 remaining PLA, he told Menon he did not expect all 19,000 to go into the army but increased the number from 3-5,000 (mentioned in earlier discussions with Sood) to 9,000. Menon replied that Indian interests were in preserving the professionalism of the army, which meant that entire units of the PLA could not be accommodated, and that

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the numbers needed to be modest.

¶6. (C) When asked if Menon had returned to Delhi reassured by the PM's remarks, Sood noted that Delhi has learned the hard way that the PM is a smooth talker, but often short on implementation. He said they would be watching carefully to see if steps were taken to address their major concerns. Sood intend to follow up on the request for Indian assistance to programs for the 4000 non-combatants by convening a donor group to gauge the ability of UNICEF, UNDP and others to respond immediately. Menon did not raise counter-terrorism concerns and cooperation, which have been at the center of many of Sood's recent interactions with the Ambassador and with the Nepalis.  
POWELL